

NOTORIOUS 1950s EC COMICS!

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## SUSPENSTORIES

**JOLTING TALES OF  
TENSION  
IN THE  
EC TRADITION!**



# RAW DEAL

OFTEN, DURING THE LONG, DARK NIGHT, THE HALLS OF THE PSYCHIATRIC WARD WOULD RING AND ECHO MADLY WITH HIS SCREAM. IT WAS A SCREAM OF TERROR, OF MENTAL AGONY, FROM A POOR, LOST SOUL, WANDERING IN A BLACK MENTAL PURGATORY. HIS EAR-SPLITTING YELL WOULD FRIGHTEN THE OTHER PATIENTS BOUND THEIR ISOOLS, AND EVEN THE NIGHT NURSES WOULD BE STARTLED OUT OF THEIR COOL TRAINED CALM. YET IT WAS NO MISERICAL GABBLE, NO LEMNATIC CHANT, THIS SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT. IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME... THREE WORDS... THE SAME THREE WORDS THAT BURST THE HOSPITAL SILENCE WITH THEIR COVERING REVELATIONS...

**I HATE HER!  
I HATE HER!  
I HATE HER!**

THAT HE GOES AHHH, AHHH, YOU TAKE HIM THIS TIME, NIGHT ROOM SIX! BOWEN SIX TOM, LORD, IF HE KEEPS THIS UP, I'LL GO OUT OF MY MIND!

THAT SCREAMING IS ENOUGH TO RATTLE ANYONE, SALLY! GIVE ME THE HIPPO! I'LL QUIET HIM...



THERE WAS NO USE TRYING TO SOOTHE THE TORTURED SCREAMER DOWN. THE NURSES HAD SOON LEARNED THAT! A HYPODERMIC FILLED WITH THE CORRECT AMOUNT OF AN EFFECTIVE SEDATIVE SOON SENT HIM BACK INTO A DELUSION MEANING, TALKING SLEEP...

THERE'S BEEN LIKE THIS EVER SINCE HE'S... THEY BROUGHT HIM IN, FOR OUT... THREE WEEKS... SCREAMING LIKE THAT... TELLING THOSE THREE WORDS. WELL, DR. BRANSON NEVER STARTS CALMING HIM!



**BUT FOR DR. ALLEN SWANSON, GREGG BOLTON WAS ONE OF HIS MOST DIFFICULT PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS. THE DOCTOR HAD TRIED EVERY THERAPY AT HIS DISPOSAL TO END THE POOR MAN'S CONTINUOUS YAWNING, INCLUDING INSULIN SHOCK AND ELECTRIC SHOCK...**



**THIS IS HIS FIFTH SHOCK. IF HE DOESN'T COME OUT OF IT NOW...**

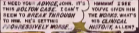
**BUT NOTHING HAS HELPED. THE NIGHTLY SCREAMING CONTINUED, AND ALL OF THE DOCTOR'S EFFORTS TO MAKE GREGG TALK, TO BREAKDOWN HIS TORTURED MIND, LED ONLY TO THE SAME THREE WORDS...**



**I HATE HER...**

**SHHHH, YOU MUST TRY TO LISTEN TO ME... TRY TO ANSWER ME. WHO DO YOU HATE? WHO?**

**FINALLY, IN DESPERATION, DR. SWANSON CALLED IN A CONSULTANT... DR. JOHN FEARSON...**



**I NEED YOUR ADVICE, JOHN. IT'S THIS BOLTON CASE. I CAN'T SEEM TO BREAK THROUGH TO HIM. HE'S GETTING PROGRESSIVELY WORSE...**

**HMMM... I SEE YOU'VE GIVEN HIM THE WORKS. WHAT'S HIS CLINICAL HISTORY, ALLEN?**

**HE'S THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF A PLANE CRASH IN THE PACIFIC... A LITTLE-RECORDED BOUND FOR HAWAII. HALFWAY THERE, THE PLANE WENT DOWN IN FLAMES, AND DANK, OUT OF AN AIRLOCKING, HE ALONE WAS FOUND, FLOATING AT SEA IN A SMALL RUBBER RAFT, AFTER FIVE WEEKS...**



**POOR GREGG! THAT'S ENOUGH TO UNRAVE ANY MIND.**

**THERE'S MORE, JOHN? ONE OF THE REGISTERED PASSENGERS WAS HIS WIFE? SHE WAS HIS GRADE? THEY WERE ON THEIR HONEY-MOON? THEY'D BEEN MARRIED LESS THAN SIX MONTHS WHEN THE PLANE WENT DOWN... SIX SHORT HOURS...**



**SAY HE OBVIOUSLY SUFFERED A SEVERE MENTAL TRAUMA BROUGHT ABOUT BY INTENSE GRIEF PLUS THE STRAIN OF THE EXPERIENCE ITSELF, DRIFTING ALONE FOR FIVE WEEKS. THINKING OF HIS LOST HAPPINESS... HIS LOVE SNATCHED FROM HIM. SYMPTOMS, OF COURSE, ARE DEEP DEPRESSION...SUICIDAL TENDENCIES...MYSTERIA?**



**YES... PLUS ONE DDD FACTOR JOHN. ONE THING I CAN'T FIT IN!**

**IN HIS ANSWER-MODES AND IN OUR TALKS, HE CONSISTENTLY SHOUTS THE SAME THREE WORDS, I HATE HER! WHOM COULD HE BE TALKING ABOUT**



**HMMM CERTAINLY NOT HIS WIFE. PERHAPS SOMEONE ELSE? ON THE PLANET? PERHAPS...ALLEN, WE'VE GOT TO PIN IT DOWN! WE'VE GOT TO BREAK THROUGH FOR A DECENT INTERROGATION! I SUSPECT WE USE AMPITAL?**



MAXIMUM DOSE OF SODIUM AMYAL, THE POPULARLY-KNOWN 'TRUTH-SERUM', WITH ITS POWER TO RELEASE DEEP BARRERS WITHIN THE SOUL MIND, ALLOWING ITS TROUBLES TO POUR OUT, WAS INJECTED INTO THE PATIENT BUT ONLY THE THREE WORDS DRAFTED FROM GREGG BOLTON'S LIPS.

AT LAST THE TRUTH BEGAN WORKING ITS WONDERS, DRIPPING DOWN BOLTON UP FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT INTO WHICH HE HAD PLUNGED...

DR. JONAS LOOKED AT DR. REARBOY...

LINDA? HIS BRIDE? HOW COULD HE HATE THE GIRL HE'D JUST MARRIED? IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, JOHN! IT DOESN'T EVEN MAKE THE RIGHT KIND OF SENSE FOR A PSYCHIATRIST. UNLESS IT'S INVERTED WORDS... INVERTED TRUE FEELING...

WHY? ALLEN LET'S NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS!



I HATE HER! I HATE HER! WHO, GREGG? TELL US WHO YOU HATE? TELL US EVERYTHING...



GREGG CALMS HIMSELF. I HATE... I HATE... JOHN? WHY OH LINDA? I... I HATE LINDA!



THE ELDER PSYCHIATRIST SPOKE SLOWLY, WITH THE DISTILLED WISDOM OF LONG EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH 'OUT-OF-ORDER' HUMAN MINDS...

SOMETIMES WE FORMULATE OURSELVES IN WORDS? COMPLICATED WHEN SIMPLICITY FEELS THE MOST ANSWER. THAT TRITE SAYING... LOVE IS CLOSE TO HATE... MIGHT NOT GREGG, KEEP HIM TALKING. GIVE HIM ANOTHER 'DOSE' AS YOU WISH, JOHN?

THE SECOND DOSE TOOK DRAMATIC EFFECT, SUDDENLY OPENING THE FLOOD-GATES, LETTING THE HEAVY-UP POISONOUS HOUR POSE...

TELL US, GREGG? TELL US WHO YOU HATE LINDA? TELL US THE WHOLE STORY? LINDA'S... I MET HER THREE MONTHS AGO AT A PARTY. SWEET LOVELY LINDA...



"BEAUTIFUL GRACIOUS LINDA. WE WERE INTRODUCED... WE DANCED... WE FELL IN LOVE. IT WAS LIGHTNING FAST. NEITHER OF US HAD ANY DOUBT, FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT."

OUR FIRST TURNING KISS SEALED OUR LOVE FOREVER. IT WAS A TENDER LOVE, PASSIONATE, DIVINE... WE LOVED UNTIL WE ACHED WITH AN INFINITE JOY THAT NEARLY BARED OUR HEARTS.



LINDA, I'VE KNOWN YOU ALL MY LIFE... LOWER! YES, GREGG? WE MET A BILLION YEARS AGO?



DARLING, DARLING... OH, GREGG...

FUNNY HOW CONVENTION RULES US, ONLY MY SENSE OF PROPRIETY MADE ME WAIT A DECENT INTERVAL... A MONTH... BEFORE WHISPERING THE AGE-OLD WISE WORDS THAT SALES FOR US WITH A MAJIC WONDER AND WISDOM...

MARRY ME, LINDA BE MY WIFE...

OH, YES, GREAT! YES, YES, YES...

NO LOVE MORE SURELINE EVER EXISTED IN THIS CRAZY WORLD OF OURS. SHE WAS EVERYTHING TO ME! MORE THAN LIFE! HOW COULD I FEEL YOUR LINDA WAS... SHE WAS... OH... SHE...

BUT THEN, AT THE EFFECT OF THE ANYTAL MOVE OFF, GREGG'S FACE SUDDENLY CONTORTED, HIS BODY RYTHED, HIS FISTS CLENCHED, AND FROM LOVERS TENDERNESS, HIS VOICE CHANGED TO A HARSH SHRIEK...

LINDA? I HATE HER! I HATE HER!

POZZLING! VERY POZZLING!



THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS STRUGGLED WITH THEIR ANGRY SCREAMING PATIENT, FORCING HIM BACK DOWN UPON THE FLOOR...

THAT'S ALL THE ANYTAL WE CAN HAVE TODAY, JOHN. I'LL HOLD HIM YOUR BETTER GIVE HIM A JERATIVE!

POZZLING. NO COMPLETE REVERSAL OF FEELINGS...



THEY STOOD IN THE HALL, OUTSIDE THE PATIENT'S ROOM, LISTENING TO HIS TINED ONES FACE...

I HATE HER! I HATE HER... HATE HER, HATE HER...

WELL, JOHN, IS THIS ONE A DOORER OR ASMT? IT'S ONE MINUTE TELLING US OF HIS HEAVENLY LOVE FOR LINDA... THE NEXT MOMENT SCREAMING NO PRAP?

SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED LATER ON IN HIS STORY, ALLEN. I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW. WE'LL GIVE HIM ANOTHER ANYTAL SHOT.



EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, THE TRUTH-ORGS LAUNCHED GREGG FURTHER INTO HIS STORY, THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS LISTENED CLOSELY...

WE WERE MARRIED SOON AFTER, AND LINDA WAS AWAY... ALL AWAY! AFTER THE WEDDING PARTY, WE HAD NO TIME TO BE ALONE! OUR PLANE... OUR MOUNTYMOON PLANE... WAS WAITING TO TAKE US TO MARRY. WE RUSHED DIRECTLY TO THE AIRPORT...



IT WAS TORTURE BEING SO CLOSE TO LINDA, SHE WAS MINE AND YET I COULD NOT HAVE HER...

DAILY A FEW MORE HOURS, DAYLING... AND THEN WE'LL BE THERE... AGAIN... THE JORDAN PALMS HOTEL... ALONE... AT LAST!

THE MOUNTYMOON... STAYS! OH, DAYLING... ALONE!



"NEITHER OF US REALIZED HOW THOSE WORDS WOULD COME TRUE IN A DIFFERENT AND HORRIFYING WAY, FOR THEN... OH, GOD... I'LL NEVER FORGET... ONE ENGINE STARTED TO COUGH AND SPUTTER. THE STEWARDESSES TRIED TO REASSURE US..."

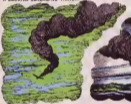
"PLEASE BE CALM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! WE HAVEN'T HAD TROUBLE WITH THE OUTRICE RIGHT ENGINE, THE PILOT WILL FEATHER THE PROPELLER. WE STILL HAVE THREE ENGINES... MORE THAN ENOUGH TO REMAIN ALOFT..."

"OH, HENRIE... I'M AFRAID!"

"HON! IT..."



"WE PLUMMETED SEWARD, LIKE A METEOR LEAVING A SMOOKING SCREAMING TRAIL..."



"DON'T ASK ME HOW LINDA AND I ESCAPED. MY MIND IS A COMPLETE BLANK. ALL I REMEMBER IS THAT SOMEHOW WE GOT OUT THROUGH THE EMERGENCY EXIT DOOR BEHIND OUR SEATS BEFORE THE PLANE WENT DOWN, AND THERE WAS AN EMERGENCY LIFE-Raft INFLATING ITSELF FROM ITS ATTACHED BOTTLE OF COMPRESSED GAS..."



"THEN, SUDDENLY, THE LURID RED BLADE ERUPTING FROM THE COOKED-OUT ENGINE... THE DYING MOTOR GIVING UP THE GHOST IN LICKING FLAME..."

"FIRE! WE'RE ON FIRE!"

"OH, LORD..."



"THE PLANE WAS A FUNERAL PYRE, FLOATING AND BURNING, CREATING ITS PASSENGERS FOR THEIR WATERY GRAVE. SCREAMS... DYING THRILLS AND MOANS... THE GREEDY SURBLES AND HOES OF THE MOUNTAINOUS WAVES... IT WAS ALL A HELLISH CONFUSED MADNESS..."



"I DON'T EVER REMEMBER CLIMBING ABOARD THE RAFT OR PULLING LINDA IN AFTER ME. WHEN WE CAME OUT OF OUR DAZED SHOCK, WE REALIZED..."

"IF ANYBODY ELSE SWIMMING AWAY!"

"NO MORE SCREAMING! JUST... SO... SILENCE!"



"AND THEN OUR HAPPY WORDS CAME BACK TO HAUNT US WITH THEIR NEW HORRIBLE MEANING..."

"'SCREAM!' WE'RE ALONE!"

"'ALL ALONE!' IN THE PACIFIC!"



AS CHRIS PAUSED IN HIS NARRATIVE, THE BITTERNESS OF THAT MOMENT IN HIS MEMORY ETCHED IN HIS PAIN-LINED FACE, THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS EXCHANGED SIGNIFICANT GLANCES, WHOOPING...

TO LINDA SURVIVED THE PLANE CRASH WITH HIM? AN UNEXPECTED FORTY? WE HAD ASSUMED, SINCE HE WAS PICKED UP ALONE IN THE RAFT, THAT HE WAS THE **SOLE** SURVIVOR. BUT... THEN, WHAT HAPPENED TO HER? **WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA?**

HUH? HE'S GOING ON... FORTY THREE PEOPLE... BURNED... DROWNED.



'WE PUT THE TRAGEDY OUT OF OUR MINDS. THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO FOR THEM. ALL THAT MATTERED, REALLY, WAS THAT WE WERE *ALIVE*... AND WE HAD TO *STAY ALIVE*.'



IT'S RAINING, LINDA! IT'S RAINING! DRINK! DRINK ALL YOU CAN, THERE'S NO TELLING HOW LONG WE'LL DRIFT BEFORE WE'RE **RESCUED!**

'WE WERE ALIVE, YES... BUT WHAT TORTURE... WHAT REFINED, EXQUISITE TORTURE, THAT TRY RUBBER RAFT... OUR "NAPALM SUITS"... OUR MONEY-WOOD "IDYLL".'

OH, LINDA, LINDA, MY POOR DARLING... SOLO. WET... SHIVERING... MISERABLE... HERE, INSTEAD OF IN A COZY HOTEL WARMED BY OUR LOVE.



'MISERY SWIFTLY BECAME UTTER WRETCHEDNESS. AS THE RAINS TURNED INTO VIOLENT STORMS THAT NEARLY PITCHED US INTO THE SEA.'



'BUT WORSE WAS THE FOG AND THE CALM THAT FOLLOWED... THE DEADLY MORGENTHAU MING-SMOTHERING HORROR OF JUST STANDING STILL IN THE GREY MIST, LISTENING HELPLESSLY AS AN OCCASIONAL SEARCH PLANE SOARED BY HIGH OVERHEAD.'



'AND AFTER THE FOG, WHEN SEARCH PLANES HAD GIVEN UP AND NO LONGER COMBED THE AREA, THE SUN BEGAN TO BEAT DOWN UNMERCIFULLY. THIRST WAS A PARCHING FIRE IN OUR THROATS, HUNGER JOINED FORCES WITH THIRST, BURNING AT OUR INSIDES. WE HAD SNATCHES NOT EVEN A CRUMB FROM THE WIND.'

GROSS! GROSS! I'M STARVING! OH, LORDS... HELP US!



'WE'D JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP WHEN A FLEETING FISH BLUNDERED ABOARD OUR RAFT AND WE POUNCED UPON IT WITH BRUTAL BEING.'

RIP IT APART, LINDA! DON'T WASTE A DROP! NOT EVEN THE GUTS! MMM... BUT... GOOD! DELICIOUS...



'BUT AFTER THE FISH... NOTHING... NOT A BITE... EXCEPT FOR THE FEW HANDFULS OF PLANKTON I MANAGED TO SCOOP UP WITH MY HANDS. WAGGOTS ARE AT MY SOUL AS I WATCHED MY BELOVED GROW THINNER AND THINNER, WASTING AWAY.'

SO... HENRY... SPEED? SO HENRY? AND NO SHIP... NO PLANE... IT'S HOPELESS... HOPELESS!

LINDA... BAST!



'I DID ALL I COULD TO KEEP HER ALIVE... WERE LINDA? MY SELF? WHEN IT? IT WILL... HELP... KILL... THAT... EMPYNESS... INSIDE.'

OH... SPEED? OUR LOVE? AT LEAST NOTHING WILL KILL THAT?



'THE FEVER... THE THIRST... THE HUNGER... NOTS GARRING AWAY IN OUR GUTS... THE STERNTED... STRAINING TO SEE A SHEP ON THE HORIZON... A PLANE IN THE VANT BLUE ABOVE... THEY COULD NOT STOP US FROM HOLDING EACH OTHER... WARMING OURSELVES WITH OUR LOVE EACH COLD BITTEN NIGHT...'



'YES, IF THAT PAINFUL ON DEAL PROVED NOTHING ELSE, IT PROVED THAT OUR LOVE WAS UNWOMMABLE... STEADFAST... UTTERLY UNWOMMABLE TO ANYTHING... TO THE LAST... LINDA LOVED ME... AND I LOVED LINDA.'

SPEED? WHEN YOU WERE PICKED UP... YOU WERE ALONE? WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA?



'WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA? CAN'T YOU GUERS, DOCTORS? DAY AFTER ENDLESS DAY... SITTING THERE... OPPOSITE ME... UNDER THE SHOLING SUN... STARVING... STARVING! SHE STARTED TO HABLE... TO HAVEL... TO GO OUT OF HER MIND... SHE SAW THINGS THAT WEREN'T THERE... HEARD THINGS...'

HEAR IT GINGIT... IT'S A PLANE! THERE IS NO THERE! NONE TO IT, GINGIT. MAKE THEM SEE' US.

THERE ISN'T ANY PLANE, LINDA! STOP IT! STOP IT!



'THIRST MUST HAVE MADE HER DRINK SEA WATER WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING? BEFORE MY EYES, IN THOSE LAST DAYS, I WATCHED MY LOVE WHINE... AND SCREAM IN AGONY... AND SAIL... AND WHETON... AND COUGH UP BILE... AND FINALLY, MERCIFULLY, DIE.'

LINDA... SEE... MY LINDA...





THERE WAS A MISHED MOMENT FOLLOWING, A TEAR STOLE DOWN STESS'S FACE, THERE WAS A WARM LOOK IN HIS EYES... A FAR AWAY LOOK, HIS LIFE TWISTED INTO A HALF-SMILE... DOCTOR SWANSON BENT FORWARD, IMPATIENT FOR HIM TO GO ON...

DR. SWANSON SHOOK STESS, STESS'S EYES BOPPED, HIS FACE GREW TAUT... ABBEN, HE CHUCKLED, HE SCREAMED...



BUT THEN... WHEN DID YOU BEGIN TO HATE HER? WHAT HAPPENED?  
GO ON!

LEAVE HIM ALONE, ALLEN!



I HATE HER!

BLAST IT! HE'S SOME OFF AGAIN! I'LL GIVE HIM ANOTHER SHOT.

DON'T BOTHER, ALLEN!



I HATE HER!

LISTEN TO HIM! WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENED IF I DON'T GIVE HIM...

THERE'S NO NEED FOR ANOTHER SHOT, ALLEN! I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!



YOU KNOW? YOU KNOW WHY HE CHANGED... WHY HIS LOVE CHANGED TO HATE?

HIS LOVE NEVER DAMAGED! THE MIND IS A STRANGE THING, ALLEN... YOU... SOMETHING? MEMOIR-ASSOCIATION SOMETHING FRIGGS US. WE HEAR WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR. SOMETIMES WE HEAR BROOD!



HEAR BROOD, JOHMY?

THE MAN WAS ALIVE AFTER FIVE WEEKS IN A LIFE RAFT, ALLEN. HOW COULD A MAN BEY ALIVE WITH NO PROVISIONS... NO WATER FOR FIVE WEEKS?



I HATE HER!

HE'S NOT SAYING 'HATE', ALLEN! LISTEN CLOSELY! HE'S TELLING YOU WHAT HE DID AFTER LINDA DIED! HE'S TELLING YOU HE STAYED ALIVE!

GOOD LORD!

THE END

# The CONFIDANT

THE TRAIN WALKED AWAY, CLATTERING INTO THE NIGHT, AND HE STOOD IN THE PLATO BLACKNESS OF THE DRENCHED RAILROAD STATION. THE NOISE OF THE DEPARTING LIMITED FADDED, AND THE BLUENCE CLOSED IN, AND HE SUDDENLY FELT THE TENSENESS OF THE TOWN... THE ANGER THAT SEETHED WITHIN IT. MEN BELLED ABOUT HIM WITH FIRE IN THEIR EYES AND CURSES ON THEIR LIPS, SHUDDING AND TALKING QUIETLY AND DYING HIM SUSPICIOUSLY. HE PULLED HIS BLACK HAT DOWN AROUND HIS FACE, TIGHTENED HIS BLACK SCARF, TRIMMED BY HIS BLACK OVERCOAT COLLAR, AND STARTED PAST THEM... PAST THE MEN WITH THE GUNS IN THEIR POCKETS AND THE CLUBS IN THEIR HANDS AND THE ANGERS IN THEIR HEARTS...

HEL, YOU' STRANGER!  
YOU JUST GOT OFF THAT  
TRAIN, DON'T YOU?

Y-YES! I'VE COME TO SEE  
ONE OF MY CHILDREN!  
ANYTHING WRONG ?



JUST GO WHERE YOU'VE  
GONE AND BE GOOF ABOUT  
IT AND STAY OFF THE  
STREETS. THIS TOWN  
WENT SAFE FOR A  
STRANGER THESE  
DAYS...

I DON'T  
UNDER-  
STAND!  
WHAT  
HAPP-  
PENED?

YOU'LL  
FIND OUT!  
YOU GO  
WILL TELL  
YOU!



HE FELT THEIR HATE AND THEIR ANGER AND HE DIDN'T LINGER TO ASK MORE QUESTIONS BUT TURNED AND ENTERED THE STATION WAITING ROOM. THERE WERE MORE MEN THERE, SATURNED AROUND THE PORT-BELLED STOVE... MORE MEN WITH GUNS AND CLUBS AND DURT HEARTS AND UNRESTFUL EYES...

HE'D BE CRAZY TO  
TRY AND TAKE A  
TALKER OUT! I  
DUN HE'S MOVED  
UP IN TOWN...

JUST LET  
HIM SHOW  
HIS FACE  
JUST LET  
HIM COME  
OUT TO  
EAT...

I WED YOU!  
HARDON, DUN...  
IS THERE A  
TALKER...?



THEY LOOKED AT HIM... PEERED BENEATH HIS BLACK HAT WITH INTO SHRETES... STUDIED HIS MELLOW-CHEEKED FACE... HIS THIN-LINE MOUTH...

YOU'RE A STRANGER! YOU JUST GOT IN ON THE TRAIN?

YES! I WAS WONDERING IF I COULD GET A TAUP



THE CAR DRIVER OPENED THE DOOR TO HIS CAR AND THE STRANGER IN A HURRY CLIMBED INTO THE FRONT SEAT...

ONE OF THE MEN WITH A GUN STEPPED FORWARD...

I'VE GOT A GUN OUTSIDE! BRINGS YOU DOWN!

I'VE GOT THE ADDRESS RIGHT HERE!



THE TRAIN CAR DRIVER LED THE STRANGER OUT OF THE STATION WAITING ROOM INTO THE LOBBY BARBERS AGAIN. IT WAS RAINING HARDER NOW.

YOU GOT RELATIVES? ONE OF MY CHILDREN?



THE CAR DRIVER LUNCHED INTO THE FRONT SEAT AND STARTED THE MOTOR.

WELL, WHEN YOU GET TO YOUR BOB'S HOUSE, STAY THERE! A LOT OF THINGIE-HAPPY BOYS ARE GOING THE STREETS THESE NIGHTS...

I KNOW! I'VE BEEN WARNED!



THE CAR LEAPED AHEAD INTO THE DOWNPOUR, SWINGING OUT OF THE STATION PARKING LOT...

YEAH! WE'VE LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY WE'VE LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY REAL HARD...

WHO? WHAT DID HE DO?



THE BOB STATION'S JUST LIKE THIS... AND ALL THE ROADS LEADING OUT OF TOWN, EVERYTHING'S BEING WATCHED...

OH? LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY?



THE CAR DRIVER PEERED AT HIS RIGHT THROUGH THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR...

WE DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS... WE DON'T KNOW HIS NAME! ALL WE KNOW IS WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE AND THAT HE WAS A STRANGER IN TOWN...

... AND THAT HE'S A MURDERER!



THE STRANGER IN BLACK LEANED FORWARD...

DID YOU SAY... MURDER?

YEAH! MURDER! THE GUY WERE LOOKING FOR KILLED A NINETEEN YEAR OLD GIRL.



THE CAR DRIVER BRAGGED...

NEFF I'M DRIVING, AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE I'M GOING!

OH... I'M SORRY! TAKE ME TO 155 BRUVE STREET.



THE CAR DRIVER'S EYES NARROWED...

155 BRUVE? IF YOU'RE SURE YOU GOT THE RIGHT ADDRESS?

WHY FEE? THAT'S WHAT IT SAYS. 155 BRUVE? SOMETHING BRUVE?



THE CAR DRIVER BRAGGED...

NOBODY'S BRUVE! IT'S JUST THAT 155 BRUVE STREET IS IN THE BRUVEST SECTION OF TOWN! YOU SAID FOUR BRUVE...

HE... HE'S BEEN... SOME ON HIS LOCK LATELY! I'VE COME TO... NEFF I'VE GOT OUT!



THE CLEANING WET WAS MOVED THROUGH THE BLACK DOWNPOUR, UNFOCUSED SHIMMERING STREETS THAT HARBORED ONLY THE REFLECTIONS OF THEIR OWN STREET LAMPS. FROM TIME TO TIME A GROUP OF MEN MOVED IN AND OUT OF THE HEADLIGHT BEAM...

MORE MEN WITH GUNS AND FLASH LIGHTS.

YOU... YOU HAVE SOME A FORCE ORGANIZED...

WE'LL FIND HIM. WE'LL FIND HIM IF WE HAVE TO BEAT EVERYBODY IN THE COUNTY. HE WON'T GET AWAY...



THE LAMES GREW SPARKER AND THE HOUSES GREW SHARPER AS THE CAR RANMED THROUGH THE SLAM SCARED TOWN...

... AND WHEN YOU FIND HIM, WE'LL HAVE A FAIR TRIAL, OF COURSE...

TRIAL, NOTHING. WE'LL HANG HIM FROM THE NEAREST TREE...

YOU MEAN YOU'D LYNCH HIM? WITHOUT.

HE'S A KILLER, AIN'T HE? HE PICKED UP ONE OF THE SWEETEST GALS IN THIS TOWN OLD JER BARKER'S DAUGHTER. TOOK HER DOWN BY THE RIVER. AND WELL... THEN HE MURDERED HER! YEAN! WE'D LYNCH HER YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT! THE MINUTE WE GET OUR HANDS ON HIM!



THE CAR STOPPED BEFORE AN OLD RUN-DOWN STRUCTURE HOUSING A DIRTY-LOOKING BAR WITH TWO BROWN-WOODEN FLOORS ABOVE. THE STRANGER STEPPED OUT OF THE CAR AND PAID THE DRIVER...



"YOU BOWE' THIS IS THE PLACE YOU WANTED?"

"YEP! THIS IS IT! KEE! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!"

THE STRANGER STEPPED INTO THE MUSTY INTERIOR OF THE OLD BUILDING AND CLIMBED THE SCREAMING STAIRS...



THE CAR SWIRL AROUND THE CORNER AND SCREAMED TO A STOP. THE DRIVER STEPPED OUT...



THE CAR DRIVER WATCHED THE MAN IN BLACK CROSS THE SIDEWALK TO THE BAR, FEEL IN, THEN TURN TO THE DOOR LEADING TO THE APARTMENTS ABOVE...



"SOMETHIN' FISHY ABOUT THIS! WHAT'S A SWELL-DRESSED GUY LIKE HIM WANT IN A JOINT? LIKE THAT?"

THE CAR DRIVER BANKED THE ENGINE OF HIS TAXI AND SPED OFF INTO THE WATERFURY NIGHT...



THE STRANGER STOOD BEFORE THE BUTTERED DOOR OF THE APARTMENT CORRESPONDING TO THE NUMBER IN THE LETTER IN HIS HAND. HE KNOCKED SOFTLY...



"WHO...WOUD'S THERE?"

"IT'S ME, JEMMY! YOUR..."

HE WALKED BACK UP THE BLOCK TO THE BUILDING WITH THE SHABBY BAR WHERE HE'D DROPPED THE STRANGER. HE HESITATED A MOMENT AT THE DOOR TO THE APARTMENTS ABOVE...



THEN HE DARTED UP THE ALLEY TO  
THE REAR OF THE BUILDING...



THE STRANGER WAS THERE, ALL RIGHT... SITTING ON A  
BED... HIS COAT, HAT, AND SCARF BESIDE HIM... HIS  
BACK TO THE WINDOW, BUT THERE WAS SOMEONE  
ELSE IN THE ROOM WITH THE STRANGER. ANOTHER  
MAN... HE WAS WATCHING THE STRANGER THROUGH HIS MIRROR...

THE ONE LIGHT STREAMING INTO  
THE DOWNPOUR SHOWED THE CAB  
DRIVER HIS OBJECTIVE. HE SWUNG  
HIMSELF UP ONTO THE FIRE-ESCAPE  
LADDER...



...AND STEALTHILY CLIMBED UP INTO  
THE RIGHT WING, HE COULD SEE INTO  
THE ILLUMINATED ROOM...



IT'S HIM! IT'S THE GUY WE'RE  
LOOKING FOR! THE MURDERER!



THE MEN AROUND THE PUB-BELLIES STOVE IN THE  
STATION FROZE, LIKE WAX STATUES, AS THE CAB  
CAME IN, SHOOTING...



O'RONN! I'VE FOUND HIM! I'VE  
FOUND OUR BILL LEFT! HE'S HOLED  
UP OVER ON GROVE STREET, THAT  
STRANGER THAT CAME TO TOWN  
LED ME TO HIM! O'RONN!

LET'S GO!



Beatty? I'VE GOT TO GET  
BACK AND TELL THE BOYS!

THEY POURED FROM THE STATION WAITING ROOM WITH  
CLASH AND BANG AND ANGRY FACES. CAR DOORS SLAMMED,  
CURSES RANG INTO THE NIGHT, ENGINES HORNED...



FOLLOW ME!

STOP OFF AT THE BUS DEPOT!  
GET THE REST OF THE BOYS!

CARS FLASHED THROUGH THE LIGHT NIGHT MEN SHOULDED TO OTHER SIDE. MORE CARS JOINED. LITTLE GROUPS WITHOLLING THE STREETS ON THE WAY WERE FORCED UP, A ROARING, SCREAMING CONFUSION OF AUTO ENGINES AND SCREAMING BRAKES CONVERGED ON THE SHARBY BAR ON GROVE STREET.



THE OLD BATTERED DOOR RELEASED ITS WEAK HOLD ON ITS HINGES AND CRASHED INWARD, AND THE ANDY MEN HOURS THROUGH...



THE STRANGER BROOK HIS HEAD...



HICKEY FOOTERS POUNDED BY DRUMS THAT SOUNDED LIKE USED WOODEN CRADLES. SHAWLING WORDS FILLED THE MISTY STRUCTURE...



THE STRANGER IN BLACK STOOD ALONE BEFORE THE INTRUDERS, CALMLY PUTTONING HIS OVERCOAT...



THE STRANGER STARTED TOWARD THE DOOR...

THE STRANGER SMILED CAT FROM BENEATH HIS BLACK HAT... A THIN-LIPPED, BIG SMILE...



I'M SORRY DON'T ASK ME ANYTHING ABOUT HIM, I HAVEN'T THE JOINT TO SPEAK OF WHAT I KNOW...



THEY HELD HIM WITH HIS ARMS  
BEHIND HIS BACK, SOMEONE KNOCKED  
OFF HIS HAT, SOMEONE ELSE SLAPPED  
HIS FACE. SILENTLY...



FISTS STRUCK OUT, FISTS WITH  
FURY AND ANGER AND FRUSTRATION  
BEHIND THEM



SOMEONE STRUCK OUT WITH A CLUB,  
SOMEONE KNOCKED HARD, THE TIGHT-  
LIPPED MOUTH REMAINED SEALED



THEY'D SEARCHED FOR DAYS, THESE MEN. THEY'D HOUND-  
ED THE KILLER, ITCHING FOR REVENGE, HUNGRY FOR HIS  
BLOOD, BERTHING WITH HATE AND FUELED WITH THE  
EXCITEMENT OF INFLECTING PUNISHMENT. THESE WERE  
ANGRY MEN ON A NIGHTMARE CASE, AND NO  
ONE COULD STAND IN THEIR WAY. THEY POUNDED AND  
KICKED AND PUNCHED...



HE LAY IN A SLUDGY SCENTED HEAP UPON THE FLOOR,  
THE STRANGER. BESIDE HIM LAY A WHITE PIECE OF  
PAPER - CLEAR AND PURE WHITE. SOMEONE PICKED IT



THEIR FRUSTRATIONS AT JUST MISSING THEIR SHARRY  
POURED DOWN UPON THE STRANGER IN BLADE BECAUSE  
HE WOULD NOT HELP THEM - WOULD NOT GIVE THEM THE  
INFORMATION THEY SOUGHT. CLUBS, GUN-BUTTS, BRASS-  
KNUCKLES - ALL FOUND THEIR MARK UNTIL



SOMEONE KNELT AND PULLED THE BLACK SCARF  
FROM THE DEAD MAN'S NECK, SLOWLY SPUN THE  
BLACK OVERCOAT - HIS STIFF WHITE COLLAR WAS JUST  
BEGINNING TO DISGORG THE BLOOD THAT JETTED FROM  
HIS TIGHT-LIPPED MOUTH...







# PROPOSAL



He had met her at a Gala Dance, wherein had gathered the employees of the Hofbauer Pig Iron Factory. For weeks before, since he first noticed her in Accounts Payable, Marvin Bandlenoff had eyes for no one but the slim blue-eyed girl with the upswipe blond hair. Silently Marvin had gazed at her – silently he had yearned to meet the young woman named Desire Finch. But Marvin was a serious young man: introducing himself brusquely was not to be considered. That's why the Gala Dance was such a godsend. True, he hadn't actually *danced* with her – too many others waited in line for *that* blissful experience – but he *had* escorted her home. In the darkness of the night they strolled side-by-side, and Marvin's heart had nearly burst through his bear-skin-on-when-shut-with-desire-for-Desire. For a fleeting moment he had even entertained the brazen idea of holding her hand. But it was enough, Marvin reasoned, just to *over* her!

A week later – after he had wined and dined her at Ye Vrealburger Volkhalle, and danced with her at the Rading & Rowing Club – Marvin made up his mind. Donning his newest sack suit, he set his stiff arrow hat at an aggressive angle and, his courage renewed up, set out for the Finch home. The worst that could happen, he mused, was for elderly Mr. Finch to say NO when Marvin revealed that his intentions toward Desire were marital.

The slim girl, herself, answered the doorbell, her flashing smile lit the way to the parlor, where her daddy scooped over the ship's arrival column of the evening paper. With a

leaving the two men to their conversation. The way she had smirked told Marvin that *her* answer, at any rate, was an emphatic YES!

Hear-bearing wildly, Marvin plunged into the object of his vast. His prospects in Pig Iron were good – he neither drank, smoked nor cursed – he had a tidy bundle stashed away in the local bank. That was why he considered himself worthy of asking Desire's hand in marriage.

Old Mr. Finch arose, musing over and over to himself. "The lad wants her hand, eh? It's her *hand* he's come for, is it?"

Marvin held his breath while Mr. Finch crossed the room, opened the double-doors and called for his daughter. Marvin's heart ascended to his throat while the girl entered and glared coyly at him.

"The young man has come to ask for your hand, daughter," the older man intoned. "What do you say?"

Without a moment's hesitation Desire smiled openly at Marvin. Her left hand circled her right wrist and, with a quick movement, twisted energetically. Marvin Bandlenoff's mouth gaped awkwardly. Desire had unscrewed her right hand and was offering the real-istic prosthetic appliance to him.

"You have what you came for," the old man said kindly, as Marvin stared at the artificial hand he had been offered. "When you wish to ask for something *else*, feel free to make the request!"

And with that, Mr. Finch scooped and went back to reading the ship's arrival column in the evening paper.

# FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD!

GO AHEAD, MARTY! FINISH THE JOB! YOU'VE GOT TO NOW! KILL HER! TIGHTEN YOUR FINGERS AROUND HER SOFT WHITE THROAT! SQUEEZE! TIGHTEN! TIGHTEN! SQUEEZE! TILL YOU KNOW OFF HER SCREAMS SQUEEZE TILL SHE STOPS CLAMPING AT YOU. SQUEEZE TILL HER LUNGS STOP HEAVING AND HER EYES ROLL BACK, BLIND WHITE, AND HER CONVULSIVE BODY GOES LIMF.



ALL RIGHT, MARTY, IT'S DONE. YOU CAN STOP NOW. YOU'RE JUST SQUEEZING THE NECK OF A CORPSE, NOW SHE'S DEAD. WELL, DON'T JUST STARE THERE LOOKING STUPID! YOU'VE JUST COMMITTED MURDER. YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE, TML FAST...



THAT'S IT, MARTY! HURRY AWAY FROM THE SCENE OF THE CRIME! HURRY FROM YOUR SICKENING FILTHY DEED! YOU'RE SAFE, MARTY! NO WITNESSES! NO ONE TO TALK! NO ONE TO... TO... MARTY! WHAT'S TIME, MARTY? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?



SHUT UP, MARTY! DON'T SAY THOSE THINGS! SOMEBODY WILL HEAR YOU! WOULDN'T YOU'RE NOT SAYING THOSE THINGS! WELL, YOU HEARD IT, DIDN'T YOU? YOU HEAR THAT AGONIZING VOICE INSIDE YOUR BRAIN NOW, DON'T YOU SCREAMING LOUDER... LOUDER...



I STRANGLED HER! I MURDERED HER WITH MY OWN BARE HANDS! I KILLED... NO! NO!

THAT'S THE WAY, MARTY! AGREE WITH THAT STUPID SCREAMING VOICE... ANSWER IT BACK! EXPLAIN! BRUT IT OUT!



I'M A MURDERER? BUT I HAD TO KILL HER! I HAD TO... TO PROTECT MYSELF. I HAD TO...

SURE YOU HAD TO, MARTY BOY! MENTION OF COURSE! CERTAINLY! WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO? ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES... DRIFTING INTO THAT BAR EARLIER THIS EVENING, LOOKING FOR SOME FUN FOR A CHANGE.



TUNED OF BEING COOPED UP IN THAT LOSEY HOTEL ROOM... FINE LOOKS LIKE A QUIET PLACE. HMM... HUGE BARE... STINKING ME THE EYE, TOO...

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, OH, MARTY? A LONG TIME OF AGONY OUT. A LONG TIME WITHOUT A DRINK. A LONG TIME WITHOUT SOMEONE LIKE YOU. SO YOU WASTED NO TIME. YOU SAW YOUR CHANCE AND YOU SEIZED AT IT. YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE THAT, HAVEN'T YOU, MARTY?



HELLO, HONEY? YOU LOOK LONESOME? WHO IF A LONESOME GUY JOINS YOU? CAN I BUY YOU THE NEXT ONE?

SURE, HANDSOME! BUT DOWN! I GOT THE EVENING TO KILL! MY NAME'S MILLIE... MILLIE BELDON? WHAT'S YOURS?

YOU WERE CLEVER, MARTY! YOU WERE SO CLEVER! YOUR NAME HAD BEEN IN EVERY PAPER IN TOWN A FEW WEEKS AGO. YOU WERE CAREFUL...

BUT THAT WAS AN IDIOTIC MISTAKE, WASN'T IT, MARTY, FLASHING THAT HOLE OF BULLET? YOU DIDN'T NOTICE HOW MILLIE STARTED LOOKING AT YOU...

YOU DIDN'T NOTICE THAT SIGN OF RECOGNITION IN HER FACE... YOU DRANK AND SHE DRANK... YOU LAUGHED AND SHE LAUGHED... AND...



ER... JOE SMITH? I'M FROM OUT OF TOWN. FINE MORE OF THOSE, BARTENDER...



ONE BEER? TAKE IT OUT OF JOE'S? SAY, WESLEY? WHAT'S YOUR BYGONE NAME... WELL-HEELED?



HOW'D YOU LIKE TO TAKE ME HOME, MARTY? SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT IDEA, MILLIE!

... YOU FEEL LIKE A FOW OF BIRDS!

WHAT AN IDIOTIC FOOL YOU WERE! YOU FELL RIGHT INTO HER TRAP. SHE WON'T LETTING YOU TAKE HER HOME! SHE WASN'T TRYING YOU ANYMORE, SHE JUST WANTED TO KISS YOU.

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT "JOE" YOU ANSWERED TO "MARTIN" WITHOUT SITTING IN EYELASH! YOU'RE MARTIN GOLDMAN, THE EMBELLISHER!

WHAT? WHY... I... I...



THERE WAS NO ONE STAMMERING AROUND, MARTY! NO USE WISHING YOU HADN'T TAKEN A CHANCE AND CRAWLED OUT OF YOUR HOLE BEFORE IT HAD ALL BLOWN OVER. SHE'D RECOGNIZED YOU! YOU WERE TRAPPED...

I LIKE YOU, MARTY... SO I WON'T BE GREEDY! THE PLAYERS SAID YOU GOT AWAY WITH FORTY DOLLAR GOLD DASH! ONLY TWENTY FIVE GRAND WILL KEEP BY DON'T SWEET LIFE DAT

WHY YOU CHEAP CHEEL... I'M SWEET...



IT WAS A MISTAKE OF IMPROVISED TALENT, THOSE NAMES YOU CALLED HER, MARTY, SHE DIDN'T BRING ONE PENNY, AND SURELY, YOU SAW HER...

ALL MY FLANNERS... TISSING MY NECK... TREATING BLEED... AND YOU WANT TO CUT YOURSELF IN FOR MORE THAN HALF, YOU! A STRAMP! A GRAND I MET ONLY IN YOUR MIND...

WAIT! KEEP AWAY! WE CAN BARRAIN.



SURE, MARTY! LIKE YOU SAID? YOU HAD TO DO IT! YOU HAD TO PROTECT YOURSELF...HAD TO COVER UP ONE CRIME WITH ANOTHER. BUT THIS OTHER THING THE VOICE SCREAMING IN YOUR BRAIN, THIS MADDERING VOICE, YOU DIDN'T IGNORE IT.



I KILLED A WOMAN! I KILLED MILLIE BELSON! SHE'S BACK THERE IN AN ALLEY... DEAD!

NO! STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP...

SOMEONE'S COMING, MARTY! AND THAT VOICE WON'T BE STILL, CAREFUL, NOW! COMPOSE YOURSELF! PUT ON A POWER FACET THAT'S IT! TWISTED! YOU CAN ONLY BE AWARE OF ONE FOR A STROLL...



I KILLED A WOMAN? I KILLED... KILLED...

THIS SCREAMING VOICE... CONFESSING YOUR SIN... SHOUTING OUT YOUR GUILT... LOUDER... LOUDER... UNTIL YOU CAN BREAK IT'S ESCAPING OFF THE BUILDINGS AND SOMEBODY... ANYBODY... CAN HEAR IT...



I'M A MURDERER!

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, MARTY! HE'S STARING AT YOU, HE HEARS! HE HEARS THAT CRAZY SCREAMING VOICE IN YOUR BRAIN.



CHEER... NOT IT CAN'T HELP

I'M A KILLER! LISTEN! I MURDERED...

**OF COURSE IT CAN'T BE, MARTY! IT'S KIDNAPED! NOW COULD ANYBODY HEAR A VOICE THAT'S IN YOUR OWN MIND? IMPOSSIBLE! OF COURSE NOT, EXACTLY! BUT WHO IS HE STARING AT YOU?**



**D-DO I LOOK? I AM GUILTY! SURE, MARTY! I... I... I KILLED! I KILLED!**

**POOR, MARTY! DON'T HE GOES NEAR YOU! PLS...**



**I'M A MURDERER! I'M A MURDERER!**

**THERE! WE'VE LEFT FAR BEHIND! SLOW DOWN! WALK! WATCH THE PAPERBOY! WATCH THEIR FACES! HERE COMES ONE! HE WON'T HEAR! HE CAN'T! YES...**

**POOR, MARTY! RUN SOME MORE! RUN FROM YOURSELF! RUN FROM YOUR FILE DEED AND YOUR UGLY, UGLY CONSCIENCE!**

**AM, COME ON, MARTY! THIS IS CHILDISH! THIS IS UNCAWRY! NOW CAN ANYONE HEAR YOUR OWN GUILTY CONSCIENCE? NOW WAIT A MINUTE! LET'S THINK THIS OVER!**



**OH... I'M GUILTY! NOT I STRANGLER! LISTEN, MISTER! YOU OUGHT TO...**



**I'M A KILLER! I'M A KILLER!**



**THAT MAN... LOOKING IN THAT STOLE WINDOW.**

**NOW YOU'RE TALKING, NO! LET'S RECHECK! LET'S MAKE THE ACID TEST! STAND BESIDE HIM, LOOK INTO THE WINDOW. SEE IF HE HEARS. SEE...**

**HE DOES HEAR! HE MUST HEAR! THEY ALL HEAR! SEE HOW HE BRINGS AROUND, STARRING AT YOU IN WIDE-EYED HORROR.**



**I THROTTLED A WOMAN! I KILLED HER IN COLD BLOOD! I'M A MURDERER! I...**

**GULP!**



**GOOD LORD, MISTER... KEEP AWAY!**

IT'S TRUE, MARTY! YOUR SILENT MIND IS BETRAYING YOU...SOUND-JOB OUT FOR ALL TO HEAR... SHARDING YOU AS A KILLER, YOUR LIFE ARE SEALED TIGHT BUT THE VOICE OF YOUR CONSCIENCE IS LOUD AND CLEAR...



MISTER! WAIT... I CHOKED HER TO DEATH...

RAMP JUMP AWAY! BUT, WHOSE VOICE CAN YOU HEAR THAT VOICE IS WITH YOU ALWAYS, NOW YOU'VE HAD IT! LOOK WHO'S COMING! A DOP? HE'LL HEAR...HE'LL HEAR FOR SURE...



LOSD? WHILL I DOT WHAT...

THAT'S THE JOY, MARTY! QUICK THINKING, ETC., COVERING UP BY HANGING ON THE POLE AND SHEDDING IN THAT LOUD MISERABLE BARKING VOICE, CROWDING OUT THE OTHER...



SHWE-E-E-T A-A-A-DO... L-L-L-H-WING

ALL RIGHT! BOW! ALONG BEFORE I SHOW YOU IN... AND GUYET DOWN...

YOU WERE LUCKY, MARTY, BUT YOU MAY NOT BE AS LUCKY NEXT TIME! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? HOW CAN YOU SHOW OUT THIS STOOD-PINCH VOICE FROM YOUR BRAIN SO PEOPLE WON'T HEAR HOW? LISTEN! WHAT'S THAT RACKET? OF COURSE! LOOK AT THAT BOY...



IT'LL GIVE ME A CHANCE TO RELAX... AND THINK FREE TRYING OUT! I'LL APPLY!

**ACME BOILER FACTORY**

HELP WANTED  
NIGHT SHIFT ONLY  
APPLY AT OFFICE

LISTEN TO THAT WIDEBOY HEAVENLY RACKET... THAT EAR-SPLITTING PERPETUAL HAMMERING AND BOUNCING! IT'S AWAY! SH-TING, WILLING! YOU'LL HARDLY HEAR THAT VOICE NOW! THIS IS THE PLACE TO BE, ALL RIGHT...



NOW, WHERE'S THE OFFICE? OH, YES, THERE IT IS!

SMART BOY, MARTY! THE JOB IN THIS PLACE CERTAINLY WILL SHOW YOU THAT HAMMING COME-SIDE POURING FROM YOUR CONSCIENCE'S BIG FAT MOUTH, SO AHEAD IN...



WHEE!... WHAT NOISE?

YOU START ACROSS THE BOYER FACTORY FLOOR TOWARD THE OFFICE... THE HAMMERING THROBS AROUND YOU! SH-TING, BOUNCING... THE HAMMERING THROBS... JOE ON SUBSIDES...



WHAT THE...?

THE FACTORY IS SILENT... DEAR SILENT...

AND THAT VOICE... THAT CRAZY SCREAMING VOICE  
SCREAMS OUT THROUGH THE SILENCE...



YOU CAN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER. YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH.  
SCREAM OUT YOUR CONFESION... BUT YOUR SURPRISED  
EXPRESSIONS CHANGE IN THE SILENCE...



YOU DON'T EVEN HEAR YOUR OWN  
CONFESION! AND THE NOISES OF  
THE FACTORY, MARTY! THEY DON'T  
STOP! YOU DON'T WANT TO SPILL  
YOUR SECRETS! YOU DON'T WANT TO...

IT'S A POLICEMAN, MARTY. YOU  
SEE HIM, BUT YOU DON'T HEARING  
HIM... YOU DON'T HEAR THE  
HUNDRETS OF FACTORY MACHINES  
TELL HIM...



AND THEY LOOK AT YOU... THE WORKERS. THEY STARE  
AT YOU. THEY COME TOWARD YOU SILENTLY...



THE SILENCE, MARTY! THE SILENCE! IT'S STILL  
THERE! YOU DON'T EVEN HEAR YOUR OWN VOICE!



YOU DON'T HEAR THE REASON  
WHY EVERYBODY STARES AT YOU,  
MARTY! IT SHOULDN'T BECAUSE ANYONE  
HEARD YOUR CONFESION! THAT  
WAS INSIDE YOU...



SOMEONES ON YOUR FACE, MARTY!  
MILLIE'S SCARFACES MAKE IT YOU  
WANT BLEEDING! THAT'S WHAT  
EVERYBODY WAS STARING AT MARTY!  
MARTY DO YOU HEAR?

# WELL TRAINED

YOU STAGGERABLE TO MOVE, BAWLING IN HORROR AT THE SHARPLY NIGHTMAREISH SCENE BEFORE YOU... YOUR WIFE'S BODY, TORN BY A DOZENS BLOODY WOUNDS... HER STAGGERED ATTACKER LAUGHING IN THE ACT OF STUFFING HER FINGER INTO HIS POCKET... THE UGLY BLADE IN HIS HAND, RED-WET AND GLEAMING... YOUR DAZED MIND FIGHTS AGAINST THIS GOD-AWFUL REALITY... FIGHTS TO BELIEVE IT WILL SOON AWAKEN FROM WHAT IS ONLY A HARPING DREAM... THAT YOUR MARY... LOVELY, BLUE-EYED, RAVEN-HAIRED MARY... WILL BE ALIVE AGAIN, AND SMILING AGAIN, INSTEAD OF LYING PALE AND STILL BEFORE YOU. BUT THIS IS NO DREAM! THE BODY REAL TO BEMY... MARY IS THERE... HER RAVEN-HAIR MATTED WITH DRIED BLOOD... HER BLUE EYES STARE EMPTY AT THE COLD, WHITE CEILING. AND YOU CHOKER THE WORDS...

YOU YOU DIRTY FILTHY MURDERER...

ALL RIGHT! DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! I'LL USE THIS ON YOU IF I HAVE TO...

SIX YEARS A COP, YOU GIBSON, AND YOU'VE SEEN IT ALL BEFORE. YOU'VE SEEN THE VICTIM. YOU'VE PICTURED THE INTRUDER COMING IN... ROBBERY... BEING SURPRISED... THEN BRUTAL MURDER. YOU'VE GOTTER DICK OVER IT... GOTTEN MAD, BUT IT NEVER HIT HOME BEFORE. NOT LIKE THIS, NOT LEE SEEING MARY THERE WITH HER KILLER STANDING OVER HER. IT STARTS A SCREAMING, FOU HORROR, WHITE-HOT HATE RAMRAGING THROUGH EVERY NERVE IN YOUR BODY, AND YOU REACH FOR YOUR SERVICE REVOLVER, CURSING...

YOU SCUM! YOU GOTTEN SHUP!



HE SEES THAT DEADLY HATE IN YOUR FACE... IN YOUR BURNING EYES. HE SEES THE FAMILIAR MOVEMENT, WHIRLS, AND FLUNGES THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW. THE SHOCK OF SHATTERING GLASS RESTORES YOUR REFLEXES. A ROARISE CRY RIPS FROM YOUR THROAT. LIFE...

STOP! STOP OR I'LL SHOOT!





YOU'N' IN RANKS, AND A STEEL BLUE SCREAMS PAST THE KILLER'S EAR. HE STUMBLES, GOES SPRAWLING. YOU SPRING THROUGH THE BROKEN WINDOW WITHOUT FEELING THE AMBITIOUS PINE CLAW AT YOUR FLESH.



YOU KICK HIM. AGAIN AND AGAIN, YOU KICK. YOU DRIVE YOU HEAVY SHOE WHERE IT HURTS MOST, AND WHILE HE'S COOLED UP AND WRITHING IN AGONY YOU KICK SOME MORE...



NO MORE... SHIT! PLEASE! SHIT NO, MORE...

YOU FEEL NO SATISFACTION IN HIS PAIN... NO COMPENSATION FOR MARY. JUST SCALDING, HOWLING, SPITTING HATE. YOU DRIVE YOUR FISTS INTO HIS FACE... AGAIN... AND AGAIN... AND AGAIN...



OH, LORD PLEASE... STOP

FURY! BLIND! UNCONTROLLED! YOU TEAR AT HIS HAIR, POUNDING HIS HEAD AGAINST THE GROUND... AGAINST THE GROUND... AGAINST...



SHOOT... HE... FOR... GOD'S... SAKE! GET... IT... OVER...

AND THEN THE FURY SUBSIDES. NOT THE HATE (NOT THE LUST FOR REVENGE) THE BLINDING FURY TO TORTURE AND INFLECT PAIN SUBSIDES. YOU STAND OVER HIM... TOM BRADEN... DETECTIVE... DRENCHED IN YOUR OWN GREAT PASTIME... WHISPERING THAT THE MEET IS UP TO THE LAW.



BY... GOD... I'LL SEE YOU SOON?

YOU'RE A COP, TOM BRADEN. A GOOD COP! YOU GO BY THE BOOK. YOU KNOW THE BOOK SAYS YOUR JOB IS TO MAKE THE PRISON. SO YOU DRAG THE BROKEN HEAD OF A MAN TO A LAMPPOST AND YOU HANDCUFF HIS WRISTS AROUND IT. THEN YOU FRISK HIM. YOU FIND HIS NAME ON SOME PAPERS AND YOU SPIT THE NAME OUT...



WIFE FERRIS? WELL, I'M GOING TO WATCH YOU BRADEN, WIFE FERRIS!

YOU GO BACK INTO YOUR HOUSE WITHOUT LOOKING AT MARY, AND YOU DIAL HEADQUARTERS LIKE THE BOOK SAYS...



HELLO... ST. MICHAEL'S... SERGEANT WALLACE? HELLO? THIS IS BRADEN... AT 214 ELM. GET THE COPPER AND THE MORSER WAGON DOWN HERE. YEAH YEAH, WILL MY SON... MY WIFE...

YOU WANT AND THEY COME. YOU GO-LIVE THE NIGHTMARE FOR SET WALLACE, YOUR BEST FRIEND, DRIVING ON IN A MATTER-OF-FACT MIMOTONE ABOUT A MAN WHO BROKE IN AND FORGED AND MURDERED A WOMAN, AND WHEN THE OFFICIAL GOOD-WORK IS DONE, YOU FEEL SICK, AND BILL TAKES YOU OUTSIDE...



THIS MAN IS STILL BREATHING, HE'S GOT TO TOM! WHY DON'T YOU FINISH THE JOB? I'D HAVE KILLED HIM!

HE'S GOT TO BURN!

YOU LOOK AT THE SWELLED AND BATTERED AND SWOLLEN FACE...AND FOR A MOMENT, A FRIGHTENING THOUGHT HITS YOU...



WILL, THERE'S NO CHANCE HE WON'T GET THE CHAIR, IS THERE?

I DON'T SEE HOW, TOM... UNLESS HE DIES FROM THE BEATING...

O'MON! HELP ME GET HIM TO THE HOSPITAL, ALL HE CAN'T DIE... NOT THIS WAY. HE'S GOT TO GO THROUGH IT ALL... THE BEATING... THE JUDGMENT... THE TRIAL... THE CONVICTION, HE'S GOT TO KNOW... HE'S GOT TO KNOW ALL THE TIME HE'S GOING TO BURN!

IF IT'S BEEN AN HOUR, I'D HAVE PUT A BULLET IN HIS HEAD.



THE AMBULANCE COMES, AND YOU HELP LOAD MIKE PERRE IN. YOU AND BILL RIDE DOWN TO THE HOSPITAL WITH HIM. YOU WAIT WHILE THEY WORK ON HIM. YOU WAIT A LONG TIME...



WILL HE MAKE IT, DOC? WILL HE?

I THINK SO! IS HE A FRIEND OF YOURS, SERGEANT? A RELATIVE...?

HE'S A KILLER, DOC! HE KILLED THE SERGEANT'S WIFE... I'M SORRY, BUT... I MEAN, WHO'S GUE PROCESS OF LAW...

IT'S GOT TO BE BY LAW, DOC... GUE PROCESS OF LAW...



THE NEXT MORNING, YOU'RE BACK AT THE HOSPITAL... IN THE PRISON WARD WHERE THEY'VE MOVED MIKE PERRE...



YOU'RE GOING TO PULL THROUGH, MIKE! YOU'LL BE ALL HEALED IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS. YOU'LL FEEL LIKE LONGBORN, BUT THEN WE'LL COME... AND WE'LL TAKE YOU INTO COURT...

O'MON, GONN LAY OFF.

YOU SIT BESIDE HIM, REASSURE YOUR WORDS AT HIM...TORMENTING HIM.

THEY'LL FIND YOU 'WOLFF OF BURGESS', MIKE! THEY'LL SENTENCE YOU TO JAIL...IN THE 'GAMER' YOU'LL HAVE A FEW WEEKS TO THINK IT OVER...



...AND I'LL COME AND POINT YOU, MIKE. I'LL COME EVERY DAY I'LL COME AND I'LL FEEL FOR YOU HOW IT'S GOING TO BE... AND NOW IT'S GOING TO FEEL WHEN THEY FINALLY TURN ON THE JUICE.



Bill is there, standing over you, his hand on your shoulder...

ARE YOU GETTING OUT OF HERE, WILL YOU?  
THEY SAID YOU TWO WEEKS LEAVE, TOM WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A LITTLE FRIP SOMEWHERE?  
NO! I'VE GOT TO BE HERE! I GOT TO TELL MIKE ALL ABOUT IT I GOT TO SEE...



IT'S ETCHED IN YOUR MIND NOW, TOM...JUST HOW THE LAW YOU'VE SWORN TO UPHOLD IS GOING TO EXACT PAYMENT FROM YOU...MAYBE, MAYBE YOU'LL GET IT TO BECAUSE YOU'RE A MARY.

I'LL WATCH, MIKE...AND I'LL SEE THE JURY THROWN...SMELL THE ODDS OF THE 'GAMER' FLESH...HELP THEM DUMP HIM INTO A FINE BOX...WATCH THEM DROP HIM INTO A GRAVE...AND THEN I'LL POOL UP THE ODDS THEY COVER HIM WITH...WITH SPIT!



FROM MARY'S CHAIRSIDE, YOU HURRY BACK TO MIKE'S ROOM.

...THE PRISON WARDEN WILL COME AND SCRAPE YOUR HEAD, MIKE. THAT'S SO YOUR HEAD WON'T INTERFERE WITH THE CURRENT FROM THE GRID.  
CUT IT OUT! CUT IT!  
YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAVE NOW, MIKE...



YOU IGNORE THE DOCTOR'S REQUEST...

THEY'LL SLIT YOUR PANTS LESS SO THEY WON'T INTERFERE WITH THE ELECTRO-FRADER. THEY'RE GOING TO STRAP TO YOUR ANKLES, AND IN A LITTLE WHILE, THE WARDEN'LL COME IN...



I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU AROUND THIS MARD GRAB, MIKE!  
THE LAW DOES THE LAW THAT'S WHAT I LIVE BY! THE LAW OF THIS STATE SAYS A WARDEN-ER'S NOT GUE IN THE CHAIR...



THEN, FOR PETE'S SAKE, LET THE LAW TAKE IT'S COURSE. KEEP AWAY FROM MIKE!  
HE'S GOT TO KNOW HE'S GOING TO SCRAPE HE'S GOT TO BE DROPPED OVER THE WAY BOATY...SOL...



THE DAYS PASS INTO WEEKS, TOM HISSON, AND YOU CONTINUE YOUR VISITS TO THE PRISON BARR OF THE HOSPITAL, WAITING FOR THE DOCTOR, SNEAKING IN WHEN HE'S GONE...

I KNOW I KNOW! I'M A BREAK, GIBSON!  
THE WARDEN'LL BRING IN YOUR LAST MEAL, MIKE... ANYTHING YOU ORDER. YOU'LL STUFF IT DOWN, BUT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP IT THERE. YOU'LL THROW IT UP AND YOU'LL SMELL SOUP.



THEY'LL EVEN GIVE YOU A SHIRT, IT'S SUPPOSED TO SOOTH YOUR SENSES! BUT IT NEVER DOES! YOU'LL KNOW EVERYTHING FRANK'S GOING ON, THEY'LL COME AND THEY'LL SAY, "IT'S GONE, MIKE?"



EVEN MIKE'S GUARD FINALLY OBJECTS, BUT YOU IGNORE HIM...

DON'T YOU THINK YOU DARE TO LAUGH OFF HIM, GIBSON?  
THEY'LL HELP YOU WALK THAT "LAST MILE", MIKE... TO THE LITTLE GREEN DOOR. AND THERE IT'LL BE! THE ELECTRIC CHAIR! THE HOT SEAT?



EVEN AS THE GUARD PUSHES YOU TO THE DOOR, YOU CALL OVER YOUR SHOULDER...

GO HOME, TOM! THIS CAN'T COME ANYBODY ANY GOOD!  
THEY'LL STRAP SPONGES SOAKED WITH SALT WATER TO YOUR WRISTS! THEY'LL LISTEN MIKE. I'LL BE BACK AGAIN! I'LL TELL YOU HOW YOU'LL SUFFER WHEN THAT FIRST TEN-THOUSAND VOLT WOLF BITES YOU!



THE BRIDGING OBSESSION THAT STRIPS YOUR MIND HAS YOU TOTTERING ON THE BRINK OF MADNESS, TOM HISSON. YOUR TORTURED DREAMS ARE AN UNENDING REPETITION OF THE NAGGING THINGS YOU'VE COME THROUGH DURING THE DAY.

EVERY NERVE... YOU'LL EVEN HEAT... YOU'LL DIE  
EVERY PARTICLE... SMELL YOUR HEAT... MIKE... BURIED  
OF FLESH BURNED... SELF-BURNING... BYE... ALIVE BY THE  
WAS SCORCHED! ... HEAT! ... LAST!



AND IN THE MOMENTS OF YOUR WAKING... WHEN YOU RECALCULATE YOUR PAIN AND REALIZE YOU CAN'T THERE, AND YOU REMEMBER... IT STARTS ALL OVER AGAIN.

... WHEN THE STENCH OF YOUR GASTING FLESH FILLS THE EXECUTION CHAMBER, I'LL KNOW MARY IS AT PEACE IN HER GRAVE, MIKE...



THE MOMENT YOU ENTER THE HOSPITAL THAT MORNING, YOU FEEL THE FENCE ANXIOUS AIR ABOUT THE PLACE. BILL COMES RUNNING DOWN THE CORRIDOR AND YOU CAN ALMOST READ WHAT'S HAPPENED ON HIS FACE...

BILL? IS IT NINE PERIOD?  
YEAH? HE ESCAPED... FIVE MINUTES AGO... THEY THINK HE'S STILL IN THE BUILDING...



THE NEXT LEAVES YOU LIMB-STUNNED. A MOMENT LATER YOU FORCE YOURSELF TO RUN AFTER BILL...LATER ON WITH HIM...GASP AN AMBIGUOUS QUESTION...



HOW IN BLAZES SHOULD I KNOW HOW? HE WAS HOME WHEN I GOT HERE!

WHOSE FAULT WAS IT, BILL? I'VE GOT TO KNOW! I'LL...

FOURS...FOUR FOURS... THE WAY YOU LEFT AT HIM WAS WORSE THAN GOING TO THE CHAIR. HE JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. THE DOC SAID HE WAS CRAZY WITH FEAR...

I ONLY TOLD HIM WHAT THE LAP WAS GOING TO DO...



SUDDENLY, THERE'S A MAGNIFIC KALEIDOSCOPE OF FACES SWIRLING IN YOUR TWISTED BRAIN... SCORLINS, LEPPERS, LAUNDRY FROGS. AND THEY'RE ALL MIKE FEARS... MOGGING YOU...TORMENTING YOU...



YOU KNOW WHAT HE DID TO AMMY? HE'S GOT TO PAY FOR THAT! HE'S NOT GOING TO OWN THE LAP!

LOOK! THERE HE GOES!

MIKE DASHES MADLY FOR THE HOSPITAL ENTRANCE. BILL LIFTS HIS REVOLVER...



HOLD IT, MIKE! STOP...OR I'LL SHOOT...

NO, YOU DON'T, BILL! YOU CAN'T SHOOT HIM! HE'S GOT TO DIE IN THE CHAIR! HE'S GOT TO BURN...

YOU SCREAM AT MIKE AS HE DASHES DOWN THE HOSPITAL STEPS... AND YOU DELIBERATELY GET BETWEEN HIM AND BILL SO BILL CAN'T SHOOT...



YOU'RE GOING TO BURN, MIKE!

GET OUT OF MY WAY, TOM!

OVER AND OVER AND OVER YOU DASH THE WORDS THAT DRIVE MIKE FEARS DOWN THE SUBWAY TUNNEL LIKE A SCARED HAREMOT SCAMPERING DOWN A HOLE...



YOU'RE GOING TO BURN, MIKE!

THE SUBWAY STAIRS RUSH UP BENEATH YOUR POUNDING FEET. YOU REACH THE PLATFORM IN TIME TO SEE MIKE CLIMBING DOWN TO THE TRACKS...



FOR GOD'S SAKE...LET ME GET A SHOT AT HIM, TOM!

NO! NO! NOT THAT WAY! IT'S NOT TO BE BY LAMP! HE'S GOT TO BURN...

MIKE STARTS ACROSS THE TRACKS TO THE OPPOSITE PLATFORM. YOU WANT TO CLIMB DOWN AFTER HIM, BUT BILL HOLDS YOU IN A DEATH GRIP...

YOU SEE MIKE REACH THE OPPOSITE PLATFORM... SEE THE NARROW FEAR IN HIS FACE AS A FUMBLING BOARDING NOISE ENDS IN THE GREAT LAVERN. YOU SEE THE STEEL MONSTER TEARING OUT OF THE YAWNING TUNNEL...



ISN'T HE A FOOL?

LET ME GO! LET ME GET HIM!



GET BACK, YOU IDIOT...

YOU SEE HIM TURN BACK... HESITATE... STUMBLE OVER HIS OWN FEET IN HIS BACKWARD DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO REACH SAFETY. YOU SEE THE WILD LOOK OF TERROR ON HIS FACE AS HE FALLS...

YOU SEE HIM SPRING ACROSS THE SPINNING RAILS... REACHING OUT... CLAWING BLINDLY FOR SOMETHING TO PULL HIMSELF UP. HIS SCREAM AND THE SCREAM OF WHEEL ON TRACK COMBINE IN A SINGLE BERRY-SHATTERING SCREAM THAT BITE YOUR TEETH ON EDGE.



AND AS THE TRAIN PASSES OVER HIM, YOU SEE THE BLINKING BLUE SPARKS... SMELL THE STENCH OF BURNING FLESH...

THREE CARS PASS OVER MIKE'S BODY BEFORE THE TRAIN BRINGS TO A STOP. YOU KEEP STARING STUPIDLY AT THE RED GROUND-UP MESS THAT WAS ONCE A MAN...

YOUR VOICE IS HIGH-PITCHED... ALMOST A SCREECH...

AND EVEN YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN VOICE, TOM BISSON - IT SOUNDS LIKE THE VOICE OF A MAD MAN

WELL... THAT... CHOKES... SAVES THE STATE THE TROUBLE...

DID HE GREAT FOR LAMP, BILL? DID HE? DID HE?

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? TOM? GET HOLD OF YOURSELF!

HE'S DEAD! HE'S... DEAD!

...AND I'LL NEVER KNOW? I'LL NEVER KNOW IF HE SURVIVED ON THE THIRD RAIL... OR THE FIFTH DID HIM FIRST? I'LL NEVER KNOW!

